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Intergenerational Influence and Rituals: Children's Behavior and the New School Year

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INTERGENERATIONAL INFLUENCE AND RITUALS - CHILDREN'S BEHAVIOUR WITH NEW SCHOOL YEAR

MEĐUGENERACIJSKI UTJECAJ I RITUALI (PONAŠANJE DJECE): U NOVI RAZRED U NOVOJ OBUĆI

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Intergenerational influence, rituals, children's behaviour, back-to-school context

SAŽETAK

Osim Božića, najvažnije razdoblje za sve maloprodavače jest vrijeme kada učenici ponovno kreću u školu.¹ Do sada se u istraživanju ponašanja potrošača nije ispitivao navedeni ritual. Ovaj rad predstavlja rezultate dobivene metodom promatranja i intervjuva provedenih u Zagrebu 2010. godine u prodavaonicama Borovo. U radu se razmatra kako istraživanje u vezi s povratkom u školu doprinosi teoriji međugeneracijskog utjecaja na izbor marke² te kako se djeca ponašaju kao sudionici na tržištu.³

ABSTRACT

After Christmas, back-to-school is the most important season for all retailers.⁴ Yet, consumer behavior research overlooks this ritual. This paper presents findings from observational and interview data collected at Borovo shoe stores in Croatia in 2010. It considers how research from the back-to-school context contributes to the theories of intergenerational influence for brands⁵ and children as marketplace actors.⁶

1. INTRODUCTION

In 2011, consumers in Croatia spent an average of HRK 2,000, or about EUR 650, on a child entering first grade and an average of between HRK 600 and 2000 (EUR 85 to 650) on a child returning to school, including clothes, books and equipment.⁷ Consumers in the US spent a total of \$600 billion for back-to-school in 2010. For the parents of growing children, back-to-school means spending an average of \$102.93 on shoes each fall. For retailers, this means \$3.62 billion in total back-to-school shoe sales in the U.S.⁸ In spite of the importance of this seasonal buying ritual to consumers and to retailers, marketing research scholarship tends to overlook that the back-to-school phenomenon is a central experience in the life of a young person. Back-to-school is a prevalent theme in children's literature. The book, *Vera's First Day of School*, for example, describes universal childhood experiences of anxiety, uncertainty, fear and excitement on that big day.⁹ The book also touches on the role of parents in guiding their children through that day, from laying out a new red dress in the child's bedroom to buying a new backpack together.

In this article, we focus on back-to-school shoe shopping as an intergenerational family ritual. We focus on the experiences of the parents of primary school children in a store, Borovo. Buying new shoes for growing feet at the start of the school year symbolizes the notion of the steps toward independence that come with starting school or moving to a higher school grade. It is an instance of family consumption involving adults and children, with a focus on the child, as opposed to consumption for the entire family. Thus, because it symbolizes a new phase in a child's life stage and is an instance of children and parents shopping in preparation for that stage, we believe this is an important context for theoretical exploration of family and childhood consumption. Thus, this research explores how children learn to make consumption decisions such as brand knowledge (intergenerational effect) in the context of buying new shoes for

a new school year, at a specific store – Borovo (in Croatia). We selected this store because we are interested in the way that nostalgia influences parents to direct their child's consumption; Borovo was the most typical place to buy shoes prior to the market's opening in 1991. An expectation of this research project is that it will provide insights into how intergenerational influence develops through retail rituals.

We selected shoes as the focus of our research as opposed to apparel or supplies because, while parents may dress their primary school aged children in used or hand-me-down clothes, or make do with used supplies, they tend to buy new shoes for growing children because of the importance of shoe fit and support for the health of growing feet. Thus, shoes, as opposed to other goods, are more likely to be purchased annually. Also, we think that new shoes for the new school year may be, for most middle-class families, a universal phenomenon.

In this article, we present findings from observational and interview data collected in Borovo shoe stores in 2010. This research pays specific attention to how nostalgia and brands influence adults to take their children to a specific store, Borovo. We look at the dynamics, such as age of the child and type of footwear, that influence child participation in the store ritual. In the conclusion, we consider how future research on back-to-school might generate findings that lead us to re-consider the role of retail ritual in intergenerational influence and the role of children as marketplace actors.¹⁰

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section, we will present an overview of the consumer behavior literature on family consumption, especially consumer socialization and intergenerational influence on rituals. This section concludes with a discussion of the context of the research, back-to-school and the Borovo shoe stores in Zagreb and Vukovar, Croatia.

2.1. Family consumption: intergenerational influence

Scholars find that consumer socialization influences brand preference and loyalty, price sensitivity, information search and use of mass media.¹¹ Consumer research on socialization suggests that children learn values, attitudes and consumption practices either from observation of the consumption of their parents or from the instances in which the parents directly teach their children. Interpersonal communication in the household as well as direct efforts to teach children has an important role in how adults influence children.¹² Recent research on family consumption frames consumer socialization as intergenerational influence, broadening the concept of socialization to consider it as a transfer of information and resources that lasts into adulthood.¹³

A critique of the theories of consumer socialization research by Roedder points out that family influence operates in such a subtle manner that the process cannot be researched by the two established avenues: family communication patterns or intentional education efforts by parents.¹⁴ Extending this critical line of thought, Epp and Price argue that rituals are a rich site for exploring consumer socialization as a process.¹⁵ A unique contribution of this research on back-to-school is that it looks at back-to-school shoe shopping as a process of intergenerational transfer of brand preferences; specifically, the Borovo shoe store, as most of the parents shopped there as children. This research explores how parents share with their children preferences for the Borovo brand through back-to-school shopping.

2.2. Ritual

Rituals are a central consumer practice.¹⁶ Family consumption rituals may be understood as the enactments of family identity; that is, they allow a family to understand who it is at a point in time.¹⁷

For example, Wallendorf and Arnould find that looking at photos together can link a family to its past.¹⁸ Moisio et al.¹⁹ demonstrate that preparing and eating a meal together creates intergenerational bonds. The process by which cherished possessions are passed down and become part of a family's inalienable wealth is another intergenerational family ritual that creates identity.²⁰ Family shopping rituals such as Black Friday, the day that marks the start of the Christmas shopping season in the U.S., allow a family to emerge from the day as a unit through competing together in the retail spectacle of that day.²¹

Compared to family consumption rituals already explored in the literature, back-to-school shopping is a unique context because it focuses primarily on shopping for the child as opposed to all members of the family. Back-to-school shopping is about the child who is growing up and taking a place in the world outside the family. The growth of the child also marks the family lifecycle – from the parents with small children stage to those with school-age children stage. Thus, it is a rich context for learning how families transfer brand preferences, from one generation to another.

In back-to-school shopping, children participate in the consumption process. Prior consumer research finds that the observation of adults is a way in which intergenerational influence occurs. For example, Moore et al. report on the adults who recall observing what brand was in the pantry in their childhood home as influencing their consumption of groceries.²² As we have mentioned, scholars have called for research that explores ritual as a process of consumer socialization.²³ We anticipate that the back-to-school ritual would be an important learning process because it deliberately involves the child; in it, observation may be less directive than participation.

2.3. Consumer Nostalgia

Holbrook and Schindler define nostalgia as 'a preference (general liking, positive attitude or

favorable affect) toward objects (people, places or things) that were more common (popular, fashionable or widely circulated) when one was younger (in early adulthood, in adolescence, in childhood or even before birth).²⁴

Nostalgia may be linked to personal memories, labeled 'personal nostalgia', or imagined associations of a previous time or place of which the individual has no direct experience (historical/com-munal nostalgia).²⁵ Personal nostalgia, especially feelings and emotions linked to childhood and adolescence, is typically regarded as the more potent.²⁶ In particular, childhood memories may be viewed through "rose tinted glasses",²⁷ resulting in a more favorable regard for the past than warranted.²⁸

Previous research suggests that nostalgia-themed advertisements and branding can be highly effective. Pascal et al. uncovered positive significant relationships between ad-evoked nostalgia and attitudes to the advertisement, brand attitudes and purchase intentions.²⁹ In a follow up study, Muehling and Sprott found that advertisements with nostalgic cues evoked significantly more favorable attitudes to the advertisement and the brand than comparable non-nostalgic advertisements.³⁰ However, there is no specific academic research on the potential role of nostalgia in intergenerational influences and rituals.

3. RESEARCH CONTEXT

As the focus of our research is the process of intergenerational transfer of brand preference and knowledge of how to shop, as they emerge in the ritual of back-to-school shopping, we chose a brand and a retail outlet that has had a presence in Croatia over generations. Borovo has a rich history in Croatia. In 1931, the shoe manufacturer and retailer Bata opened a factory in Borovo village on the Danube near Vukovar, in Eastern Croatia. Bata is known for revolutionizing the shoe manufacturing process. For example,

Bata was the first manufacturer to make shoes from a standard size foot mold. It also introduced mass-produced shoes and shoes with rubber soles, available to a mass consumer market. Bata is also known for modernizing manufacturing management and labor relations. The company operated a school for employees with instruction in management at all levels. This insured standardization and diffusion of knowledge about how Bata would operate. In addition, it allowed promotion from within, as employees could be promoted within Bata's organizational structure through their participation in the school. The factory in Borovo, similar to most Bata factories opened in that period, also included a health clinic for workers, a school for the children of workers and high-standard housing. Workers could arrive via the local passenger train and local cycling roads.

After World War II, the government of Yugoslavia nationalized Bata's assets in Yugoslavia, including retail outlets and the factory in Borovo. The company was renamed Borovo, after the village and headquartered in that town. Borovo continued to produce footwear as well as rubber products, including waders, tires, firefighting equipment, and protection for the police, such as vests. A large number of those products were exported.

Many workers within Yugoslavia migrated to Vukovar to work at Borovo. Vukovar, sitting on the banks of the Danube, has a rich history. The region is known for its agriculture. However, the name Borovo, during the Yugoslav period, was synonymous with the town of Vukovar. It came under a siege, which lasted for three months in 1991. The Croatian army used some of the buildings on the Borovo campus for barracks, hospital and so on. Many of the buildings were attacked as well. The factory stopped manufacturing shoes from 1991-1994 and resumed in 1995. Again, the Borovo brand name is synonymous with Vukovar, notably with its survival.

Now, there is a Borovo store either on the main square or just off the main square of every town or city in Croatia. Borovo also has a strong retail

presence throughout the region. There are eight Borovo stores in the capital Zagreb; Borovo has a retail presence in most of the city. Employees have worked at the stores for many years, some for more than fifteen years, according to our interviews with store employees. According to interviews with the Borovo management, the brand is known for quality and good price. The company is still nationally held.

Most consumers associate the brand with socialism and mass production, as well as Vukovar, but not fashion. Yet, this perception may be changing. In 2009, in cooperation with designer Mauro Massaroto, Borovo relaunched their Startas tennis shoe brand with new designs for the fabric. In the fall of 2010, Massaroto and Borovo relaunched other classics, including rain boots and the Borosana shoe, giving them contemporary designs. Hipsters are especially known for wearing the new Borovo look while their parents and grandparents are just as likely to be seen in Startas with strange designs, as these were the shoes of their youth. Startas was Yugoslavia's answer to Converse All-Stars. They were the shoes worn to school for sports by most children.

With the relaunch of "hipster" Startas, new attention came to all of Borovo's brands, allowing consumers to "buy Croatian," in a special way that is associated with recovering from the past and taking ownership of their national narrative. A complication for consumers is that the Borovo stores (their signage says Borovo and the company owns the property) do not stock solely Borovo shoes. They usually have more shoes that were made in China. As a consumer in our research explained it, shoes from China are perceived as lower quality than domestically produced shoes. Thus, both consumers and Borovo are looking for the retailers to stock more shoes from Borovo because of quality concerns. These are intertwined with the evaluations of domestically produced shoes as being of better quality than those from China. There is a strong association between quality and Borovo and domestic production. It should also be noted that the emphasis on the importance of domestic manu-

facture as good for the future of the country is a lasting remnant of socialism in Croatia.

In sum, Borovo has been part of back-to-school in Croatia for many generations. There are back-to-school promotions in the fall. For consumers, the brand name implies the quality of domestic production as well as support for domestic producers and rewriting the national narrative. Borovo is not considered a fashion brand but it is associated with quality.

Quality footwear is important to parents and grandparents in Croatia. Usually, grandparents who are retired provide care for their grandchildren, including shopping for footwear. We are interested in how buying Croatian, quality, Borovo intergenerational transfer of brand preferences and knowledge of how to evaluate products come together in back-to-school shopping at the stores. We are also interested in the way that parents prepare their children to be knowledgeable global consumers.

Croatia is an interesting site for observational and interview research on back-to-school in a retail context because many of the variables that might influence the environment are steady. First, the timing of back-to-school is standard: almost all of the primary schools in a city start on the same day, which is usually the first Monday in September. Also, September usually marks a change in the climate in most regions of Croatia, from the heat of summer to early autumn rains. The weather requires a move from summer sandals to other types of footwear, such as boots or shoes. Most children have probably outgrown their boots and shoes over the summer, requiring a trip to the shoe store.

The end of August also marks the end of summer holidays on the coast for most people in Croatia. Most people spend some time in August on the coast of Croatia. Returning home at the end of August is part of the change of the season. Finally, most companies in Croatia tend to pay employees at the beginning of the month. For a vast number of parents, the deposit may

influence their decision to shop in the early September portion of the back-to-school season.

4. RESEARCH METHODS

The theoretical approach to this research is interpretive, using grounded theory.³¹ Grounded theory requires a commitment from the researcher to engage in recreating the life experiences of informants on both descriptive and explanatory levels. Hence, grounded theory permits an initial approach to the field with a broad question, such as: "How do brand associations and prior experiences with the store influence adults to take their children to a specific store, Borovo?". This broad frame of inquiry, through research and analysis, develops into focused research questions.

Grounded theory allows access to social processes through participant observation as well: by engaging in the daily life rituals of the society, the researcher is studying.³² Grounded theory requires the researcher to act as an instrument in data collection and to be committed to representing the life experiences of informants on the descriptive and explanatory levels.³³ It also permits research design to emerge throughout the process of data collection – in this case, it was conducted in Zagreb in September 2010.

Ethnographic approach

The ethnographic methodological approach applied in this research lies in the model of research of retail and brand ideology developed by Borghini et al.³⁴ Their model is a good fit to this research as it also concerns adolescents, retail sites and has a multi-national, multi-generational, bi-gendered research team, working in different locations. Ethnography fits the research interest in this paper because we are interested in participating in and observing the dynamics of ritual as well as understanding the process from the point of view of participants through interviews.³⁵

In-depth interviews

Prior to store visits, the second author conducted a depth interview³⁶ about shopping for shoes with a mother of three children, with the oldest in middle school and the youngest in primary school. In interviews, a semi-structured interview format was used to allow themes to emerge.³⁷ Therefore, the researchers do not have to use a structured instrument when approaching customers. We inquired about how parents share preferences for the Borovo brand with their children through back-to-school shopping. The information from the interview was used to develop unobtrusive questions to ask parents in the store and for clues on what to observe. In addition, the authors worked with Borovo to understand the Borovo brand. Interviews with marketing management described Borovo's brand perception as the one that consumers wear throughout their lives and that is known for quality while also facing competition.

After cooperation for the research confirmed by the Borovo management (neither requesting nor receiving funding), data collection took place in the stores. Observation and unobtrusive interviews were completed in the eight Borovo stores in Zagreb, and in one Borovo store in the center of Vukovar, on two consecutive Saturdays in September as well as on the Monday and Wednesday of that week. The intention was to collect data prior to the start of school on September 6. Unfortunately, due to the unfolding of events beyond the control of the authors, data could not be collected at that time. However, we continued with data collection. While the observation is not about the back-to-school context, the data from unobtrusive interviews is. It presents insights into the dynamics of shoe buying. These insights inform future data collection, scheduled to take place in Borovo stores from August 1 to September 5, 2011 as the upcoming back-to-school season. In the second round of data collection, interviews with parents and grandparents were to also consider the themes of children's life stages, physical growth, buying new shoes and back-to-school.

In their exploration of branding and the *American Girl* retail space, Borghini et al. suggested the ethical responsibility that comes with researching consumption that involves juveniles.³⁸ The ethics of working with juveniles informed the design of this research. Parents provided their informed consent prior to our observing them and their children or noting quotes by the children as they tried shoes on and interacted with their parents. Parents were interviewed unobtrusively. The interviews lasted about five minutes and were audio recorded on mobile phones. Children did not participate in interviews. They are represented here through the observation of their activities and of the quotes from the comments about shoes they made to their parents. Again, we received informed consent from parents prior to any note-taking.

In the non-obtrusive interviews,³⁹ we explored the reasons informants came to Borovo, including location, price, shoe quality, their footwear shopping for themselves at Borovo while back-to-school shopping, the role of the Croatian brand in their shopping habits and their nostalgia or remembrances of the brand and back-to-school shopping from their childhood. Observation focused on the dynamics of the adults and children and decision-making. We interviewed salespeople to learn about their insights into back-to-school and parent-child shopping for children's footwear: slippers, tennis shoes, leather (dress shoes) and boots.

The research generated about 23 single-spaced pages of observations and interview transcripts. The interview participants included 11 parents and 4 grandparents (we did not interview children). The notes reflected the activity of the interview participants and about 75 other shoppers, plus 10 salespeople (male and female, middle-aged to late middle-aged). The researchers reported that stores could be quite empty at times while bustling with customers, both browsing and trying on shoes, at other times. Most people accepted being interviewed. The researchers promised confidentiality to all of them. The response rate was 75%, based on 15 informants

cooperating out of 20 people observed in the store. Most people declined participation because they were in a hurry.

The authors of this research worked with the Borovo management to obtain the permission to access the stores prior to organizing and participating in data collection. Most of the data was collected by four female Master's students in Zagreb between the ages of 24 and 26 and one 26-year-old male employee of Borovo in Vukovar. The five researchers are from Croatia and conducted the research in Croatian. All the researchers were trained in observational data collection methods as well as in interview methods. They prepared documents from the notes and transcripts they collected. Then, they shared these documents with the authors via e-mail. The authors independently reviewed the data and then compared their findings by e-mail and Skype. In addition, they triangulated their analysis with the views of the researchers.

The analytical operations included categorization, abstraction, comparison, dimensionalization, integration, iteration and refutation. This procedure provides a means for managing qualitative data for the purpose of analysis and interpretation.⁴⁰

5. FINDINGS

In this section, we present our findings, organized around two themes: back-to-school as an annual ritual and the in-store dynamic. First, however, we present a picture of who is shopping and for what kind of footwear. Mothers and children shopping together represented six of the groups. The data also presented two cases of mothers, fathers and children together and as well as four cases of grandparents shopping for shoes with their grandchildren. It is common knowledge in Croatia that, usually, retired grandparents are caretakers of their grandchildren, along with the parents.

The back-to-school shopping season is a major project for families and for the retailer, Borovo.

The adults (parents and grandparents) and the salespeople we spoke with explained that back-to-school shopping starts in early August, a month prior to the start of school. It tends to conclude with the start of school on the first Monday in September. The salespeople and parents also explained that back-to-school sales are important in generating sales. The salespeople, informant interviews and observation indicate that in mid-September, the back-to-school shopping season is over, yet children's footwear shopping continues, in the form of boots, slippers or shoes for a special occasion. There was a mother shopping for shoes for her son as the family was to attend a wedding soon. In general, however, we observed shopping for slippers, boots and tennis shoes, with tennis shoes as the least common search. We observed numerous purchases of slippers. Children may begin to attend kindergarten at the age of 1 and elementary school at the age of 6 or 7 in Croatia. Kindergarten children in Croatia are required to wear slippers. Participant observation in homes indicates that everyone wears slippers, so they are an item that would be bought for children all the year round. In elementary school, there is no such rule about slippers. However, children are not allowed to wear shoes with black bottoms as these shoes leave black marks on the wooden school floor. Most children wear tennis shoes or boots, depending on the weather.

Borovo: perceptions of quality and the back-to-school ritual

A common theme that emerged in the collected data is that adults tend to go to Borovo with children for back-to-school shopping because of the associations they have with the quality of the brand. They interpret the shoes manufactured in Croatia as good quality goods and the imported products as being of lesser quality. For example, one of the informants, Dubravka D., was buying back-to-school sneakers with her daughter and husband. The researchers explored her reasons for coming to the store, given that there are

other shoe stores in the particular neighborhood of Zagreb, Dubrava. She explained that she had been to other stores in the neighborhood, namely Peko, which is just like Borovo. She came to Borovo because "It's Croatian...I've recently read in the papers that Borovo will start manufacturing again, I thought they would be closing soon...I also come for the discounts, but not on Chinese products. Now we'll see what the box says" (i.e. the country of manufacture printed on the shoe box that the saleswoman is about to bring). They did not buy shoes because the daughter could not decide which pair she liked.

Patricija K., a mother at a store in Kvatric, another neighborhood in Zagreb, explained that "We came here because we already bought slippers and now they smell, so we're looking for other ones and we're looking for something from a domestic manufacturer since the other ones are obviously imported from China. And now, it's not that he likes these ones, but they won't smell, that's for sure." After her son tried the slippers on and they engaged in a discussion about fit, Patricija K. bought the slippers. Maja C. also discussed her back-to-school shopping practices with her young daughter: "Every year, I do back-to-school shopping with my kids. I used to do that with my parents when I was a little girl so I do that with my kids too. I buy the shoes and slippers for them for school." However, in this instance, they did not buy shoes because they were looking for sneakers with lights and Borovo does not stock those.

Another interview involving a mother, Sanja S., who was looking for leather shoes for her son and a salesperson at a store in the Sesvete neighborhood in Zagreb, also reveals the role of manufacturing quality in the evaluation of quality by customers and salespeople: Sanja S. "Yes, the children like Borovo. Better these than Chinese shoes." Saleswoman: "Well, the imports will always be there, to tell the truth, the store will never sell only Borovo brands."

The allegiance to Borovo is apparent among grandparents as well. A pair observed at the store

in the Dubrava neighborhood was Vinko D. and his grandson. Vinko D. was looking for leather shoes. He demanded solely Borovo shoes, which was obvious from his statement: "As long as it's Borovo, that's why I came!" After a short try of the shoes, Vinko D. was content to have found what he was looking for, bought the shoes and left the store.

Consumer nostalgia

Another factor that influences choosing Borovo for back-to-school is consumer nostalgia or the informant's own experiences of going to Borovo for back-to-school as a child. When asked about where she went shoe shopping with her parents as a child, Dubravka D. explained: "I grew up around here. Borovo, Peko. Borovo always ruled. Even when I was young, 30 years ago. I saw these rubber boots, that's what I saw in the newspapers, that's what brought me back to Borovo." When asking about why she comes to Borovo, Sanja S. mentioned: "Well...when you don't have money for Prada, you do for Borovo. Just joking. In a way, I grew up with Borovo, if you get my meaning. Everything I ever owned was bought by Mom and Dad at Borovo. That's it, it stayed...and the Chinese merchandise, it's almost disposable. And I can't afford it, I don't have the money, I'm not so rich that I can keep buying all the time."

Store dynamic

In the store in Sesvete, a neighborhood at the east end of Zagreb, where there are no shopping malls or shoe stores as there are in the city center or in Kvartric or Dubrava, the three salespeople talked about their experiences. Two of the women, Vlatka and Ognjenka, had been working in the store for almost 40 years. They mentioned that most of the buyers are regular and frequent buyers from the neighborhood who come in when a certain salesperson

is working because they have complete trust in that salesperson. Furthermore, people who lived in Vukovar before the war (pre-1991) often come to the store as well as people who had worked for Borovo, and relate the brand to the "times gone by". In addition, many parents go there for the quality. Their parents also took them to Borovo to buy back-to-school footwear.

Thus, informants suggest that Borovo is associated with quality, domestic manufacturing and the past. We suggest that the past means the way things were made better in the past, as well as one's own childhood. There is a desire, we argue, to pass on to the next generation the knowledge of what cultural norms and products used to be like (with regard to quality) and should be through the ritual of back-to-school shopping at Borovo. From the perspective of ritual theory, a good ritual experience encourages participants to return for subsequent rituals.⁴¹ In addition, successful rituals should generate good feelings among ritual participants and about the ritual goods and symbols.⁴²

The data suggest that good back-to-school childhood experiences at Borovo influence parents to return with their children. In addition, the quality of the product encourages parents to return to Borovo.

Child Age and Footwear Type as Influencing Ritual Practice

Having established that most parents and grandparents decide to bring their children to Borovo for the quality and price, in addition to wanting to pass down to the next generation a cultural notion that quality products should be on the market, we discuss the ways that parents teach the children to buy shoes while in the store. Observational and interview data focused on the questions of whether the parents or grandparents let the children choose the shoes themselves and in what situations.

Most parents and grandparents say that they allow their children to make the choice of what to buy, whether that is observed in their interaction or not. One mother, Ksenja I., entered the store at Crnomerec with a daughter (age 8) and a son (age 4). She asked the saleswoman for slippers for both children. The saleswoman explained that they had only the right size for the boy and brought the slippers to the mother. Ksenja I. inspected the footbed and passed them to her son to try on. The boy tried them on and commented: "Mommy, I like them very much. They are blue." The mother bought the slippers. There seems to be a chance for children to make decisions as long as they are in accordance with their parents' decisions, the way that this parent approved of the Borovo slippers as we shall see.

We asked Ksenja I. who makes the decision about the shoes and she explained that, "I let children chose which one they like but I will not buy them if I don't see that the shoes have a footpad. Quality is important to me." Although this may seem to stand in contradiction to what we observed, other parts of the interview suggest that her purchase behavior with the children may be different depending on the age of the child and the type of the footwear being purchased. She discussed her preference for slippers for her son being made by Borovo. "I like Borovo slippers because of their quality and footpad. My son is young so that is important for him." She went on to say: "I bought Startas shoes for my daughter here, too. They are also nice." We wore Startas shoes and they have no footbed, just a rubber sole without the arch support or shock absorption, although they are fashionable. Throughout observation at the stores, we noticed that the older the child the more did the parent encourage the child to explore the store and select the shoes to buy.

Age might be the major factor when it comes to literacy and familiarity with shopping. Borovo stores often display the Borovo shoes next to the shoes of lower-quality manufactures or more expensive brands, such as Nike or Adidas. Thus, simply entering the Borovo space does not

mean that the children may choose any shoe or that it will be of the quality the parent expects from Borovo manufacturing. A younger child may or may not be literate, experienced or even familiar with what the Borovo logo looks like. So, when selecting shoes, they may not recognize the visual cues of quality such as brand names. In addition, fashion and the respective school year might play a more important role in that parents allow the preferences of older children to be part of decision-making, as is the case with Startas shoes.

Price does not seem to influence the parent in directing the child in the same way that age does. In the following example, the family seemed to be sensitive to price. Nevertheless, like the prior example, the mother managed her sons differently, based on their age. Valentina D. entered the store in Dubrava with her two sons, aged approximately 4 and 8. She encouraged the older boy to browse through the shelves and see if there is anything from the supply of sneakers that he liked. At the same time, the younger boy, who remained with her, demanded the shoes that had the Spiderman character on them but the mother told him that he did not need them. After spending most of their time at the discount table, the family left the store without a purchase.

How parents and their child might proceed upon entering the store depends on the type of footwear and the age of the child, and to a lesser extent on the price of the shoes under consideration. In the case of slippers and young children, the adults tend to direct events early on, as opposed to encouraging the child to browse the shelves. The observational and interview data suggest that parents teach their children that a quality product is important, namely a quality footbed when it comes to footwear. It also suggests that parent and child decision-making is driven by the parents; therefore, the child may make a decision as long as the parents agree with it. In returning to Borovo for slippers, especially after being disappointed by the slippers that are less well manufactured or cost less, the

parents reinforce their commitment to quality as well as to Borovo. They return to the ritual of Borovo because it has favorable outcomes.

6. CONCLUSION

In this research, we asked how the ritual of back-to-school shopping – as a useful context for learning about the role of nostalgia for a store, namely Borovo – might relate to intergenerational brand preferences. We used theories of ritual to organize our observations around these questions.⁴³ We found that going to Borovo stores together is a ritual, for both parents and children; it emphasizes the shared experience of back-to-school in the life of the family as well as the shared experi-

ence of going to Borovo stores. It is also a chance for the parents to involve their children in the family's preference for Borovo as a brand. The parents seem to be repeatedly shopping for slippers at Borovo, where they demonstrate interest in quality, suggesting a transfer of preference for Borovo and quality to the children. We expected there to be more children-led choice of shoes; yet, the data indicates that the decision should be in line with that of the parents. As for the children, their role is in trying on shoes or commenting on them, such as their color.

In future research, we plan to conduct data collection in the month prior to the start of school while also exploring more age groups of primary school children and more types of footwear. We plan to interview children as well as their parents.

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